

Activities that Support the National Reading Panel's Five Components of Literacy Development

In 1997, Congress asked the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to convene the National Reading Panel (NRP) to review existing reading research. The NRP issued a report in 2000 identifying five key skills integral to literacy development during the critical years from kindergarten to third grade. They are:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Text comprehension

The following activities illustrate simple, engaging ways tutors can support children in the development of these skills. For more information about the NRP components and related tutoring activities, see *Tutoring Our Youngest Readers: Focusing on five major reading strategies*, online at: <http://www.nwrel.org/learns/tutor/win2002/win2002.html>.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Manipulation

Ask the child to replace the /at/ sound in *cat* with a /an/ sound. *What do you have?* The child responds with *can*. Ask the child to replace the /t/ sound in *tap* with a /c/. The child responds with *cap*.

Oddity Tasks

Say a short list of words and ask the child to listen for the word that does not belong (based on sound). For example, say *man, make, boy*. The child responds with *boy*. Say *bat, cat, snake, rat*. The child responds with *snake*.

Rhymes

There are a number of rhyming games you can play. A few are:

1. Say, *I say cat; you say _____*. The child responds with something that rhymes with *cat* (e.g., *mat*).
2. Rhyme chains: Begin with a word and ask the child for a word that rhymes. For example, if you say *cat*, the child says *mat*; continue with *sat*; the child says *rat*, and so on.
3. Rhyme phrases: Ask the child to fill in the blank. Say, *I will pick a flower, and be back in one _____*. The child responds with *hour*. Or, *We were resting near a tree, when I was stung by a _____*. The child should respond with *bee*.

Phonics

Picture Sorts

Make picture cards with your tutee depicting pictures of words with similar sounds. For example, pictures that illustrate words such as *cat*, *bat*, *rat*, or *rake*, *snake*, *cake*. Place the picture cards face-up on the table in front of the child and ask her to sort the pictures into groups according to common sounds. As a variation, ask the child to sort the pictures according to beginning, middle, or ending sounds, number of syllables, or rhyming words.

Word Sorts

Create word cards (i.e., cards with words—not pictures—written on them). For example, *kit*, *bit*, *fit*, *hen*, *pen*, *den*, etc.) Place the cards face-up on the table in front of the child, and ask him to sort the words according a common sound or spelling pattern, such as vowel patterns, initial consonants, ending or middle sounds.

Word Hunt

Using a piece of writing, such as a familiar fairy tale or a book you are currently reading together, ask the child to search the text for a particular sound or pattern. Examples might include: the long *o* or short *o* sounds, words that begin with *th*, words that end with *-ing*, etc. As the child finds the words in the text, have him list them on a separate piece of paper. Then help the child transfer the words to the index cards—one card per word—that you can then use for word sorts (see above).

Fluency

Model, Choral, and Practice Readings

Using short passages (or poetry), select a piece from a familiar text or the book the child is currently reading. Reading aloud to the tutee (modeling) or with the child (choral); then invite the child to read alone, trying to match both the model and choral readings.

Practice reading is just that—have the child practice reading a short passage or poem aloud. Remember, all of these activities are only effective in improving a child’s fluency if she understands what she is reading; using texts from books the child has already read is preferable.

Read Aloud

Have the child read aloud to you and/or another child. If fluency is a big issue, have the child re-read a short passage to practice and re-practice until he reads the passage as fluently as possible. Again, it is important that the child understand the passage *before* practice in fluency is achieved.

Another read-aloud exercise is to alternate reading with the child, either by paragraph or by page. In your turn, model fluent reading for the child. A variation: you and the child each “become” one of the characters in the book and read the dialog. This activity also supports comprehension, as the child will have to pay attention to punctuation and tone in order to read the dialog successfully.

Vocabulary

Labels

Choose things in the rooms that you or the child want to label, such as body parts, articles of clothing, objects in the room, etc. As you label things verbally, write the names on small cards. Tape the cards to the corresponding objects. After modeling the activity, alternate with the child or allow her to do all the labeling herself. Repetition of this activity supports vocabulary development as the child may try to use words from previous sessions.

See It/Name It

Look around the room and name things you see, alternating between yourself and your tutee. (Even in an empty room you will be surprised by how many things you can name!) If the child names the more obvious items in the room, look for more unusual objects to expand the child's vocabulary. Again, repetition is important so the child will have a chance to use any new words the next time you play.

For a fun variation, set a timer for three minutes and ask the child to list everything he sees in the room. Make a list of your own and compare lists when time is up. Eliminate any words that appear on both lists and count how many unique words each list contains.

Text Comprehension

Say It With Feeling

Bring a list of short sentences that express different feelings through both words and punctuation. (Examples: *Oh no, groaned Mary. I don't feel well. I'm so happy!*) Ask the child to read the sentences with feeling. Prompt the child by asking questions like *How would you say that if you were really happy? Sad? Angry? Worried?* Alternately, ask more open-ended questions like, *How would you say that? What are your clues?*

Retell

After reading a story together, ask the child to retell it to you. Encourage her to go beyond a simple plot summary, and tell the story in sequence, with a beginning, middle and end, including as many details as she can remember. In addition to recounting the story out loud, you can ask the child to do a dramatization (acting out passages or role-playing dialogue with you) or engage her in a puppet play (using puppets, you and the child act out what happened). Especially for younger children, simple puppets representing the characters in the story may be helpful.